



OXFORDSHIRE RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LIMITED

Executive Board Meeting – 8th December 2020

7.00pm – Virtual Zoom

Executive Board Meeting

Attendees:

Karen East (Secretary), Rob Walsh, Pete Bramley (Chairman) Gina Overton, Chris White, Doug Bosley, Jane & Paul Weaver, Philippe Perisegaele, Andrew Tacon (Treasurer)

Apologies: None.

Guests: Steve Grainger (RFU), Becca O'Neill (RFU)

Chairman: Pete Bramley

1. Approval of Minutes from October 2020 Meeting and interim meeting November 2020 and Matters arising.

The minutes from the October 2020 and November 2020 interim were approved with no matters arising.

2. Steve Grainger and Becca O'Neill

Steve and Becca introduced themselves to the board.

They are looking forward to working with us and are planning next steps. The relationships between CBs and clubs have strengthened through Covid and we have a unique opportunity to work together to move things forward. Becca is looking after 8 Constituent Bodies. The next few months will allow Becca to work out what our priorities are and where support is needed. The team is going to be pulled thinly, the group is smaller than it was.

We should see a greater interaction that in the past with Becca if we want it.

We have rebooted non-contact rugby offer, we have come close to getting the game restarted but the chief medical officer has stopped it. They are calling the shots. The other challenges are government restrictions (spectators, travel, clubhouses etc.).

Travel is an issue; clubs on the border (Warwickshire etc.) have issues due to Covid tiers. The plea is to just carry on and lets hope things improve.

Questions to Steve Grainger

1. What is the RFUs plans if there is a 3rd lockdown in January, Will we go back to stage D / E or remain at stage F. And
Are we going to stage F after the 18th December or are we staying at stage E which states in the RFU road map only 2 x 10minutes of contact. If the RFU want clubs to start playing the adaptive game from the 19th then surely the clubs would need to be ready for 80 minutes contact, which would mean full sessions of contact training not 2 x 10 minutes.

Answers from Steve Grainger

- A. If there is another national lockdown it will depend on the government restrictions. We are reliant on whether the government states we can play.
- B. Stage F is full contact, 15 aside as we know them. Stage F is back to normal. Stage E is a variance of the 15 aside against other clubs. We will stay at Stage E.
- C. Contact at training, when we got approval to come back we were all told we had to further in training, which is where the 10 min rules came from. This is the amount of close contact we have. In drills you are probably not in close contact for more than 5 seconds at a time so 20 tackle drills would probably only take up a minute. It will be unlikely you would top over those 10 minutes unless you were doing a lot of detailed ruck work. RFU will try and explain this better.
- D. The RFU does not want games played by 19th; it is up to clubs if they want to play. It gives flexibility to those that want to. Matches do not have to be 80 minutes, they can be 40 minutes for example or 3 x 20 min matches with breaks.

2. What funding will be made available to clubs if we are forced to close again and forego match day income for longer? Particularly in view of the RFU 2020 accounts showing a positive cash flow of £38.5m at the end of 2019/20 and in light of the recent government cash injection of £135million.

Answers from Steve Grainger

A. The RFU has a debt position of 75 million; cash of £35 million is not cash for distribution. The RFU works on a 4-year cycle. The money is not sitting ready to be given out, it is planned to pay off debt, which they get into over a 4-year cycle. The £135million from the government (up to) is phenomenal. This revenue is to purely account for the fact that the RFU could not have spectators this year and it will be assessed tightly before being given out as it is government money. Meetings with the government continue to determine how it can be distributed. £59 million has been allocated to premiership clubs – this was not RFU decision but government decision. £44 million is allocated against RFU losses. Some of the £44 million will be used to support the community game.

It is not the RFU fault that spectators cannot attend games and that we are not operating as we were pre-Covid – these are government restrictions.

3. When will the RFU announce details of how clubs can access the government funding? Loans are not the answer and indeed just push the problem further down the line to Grass roots.

Answer from Steve Grainger

A. We do not know yet, the RFU are in dialogue with the government. Sport England will probably distribute to RFU to then pass to clubs. It is likely to be means tested and is likely to be designed to stop clubs going under.

If there are clubs that would literally go under in the meantime the CB can raise a case to the RFU for funding sooner. The desire is to stop clubs going under.

4. What are the RFUs and Steve's plans to reach out to grass roots over the coming months to rebuild the game and bridges.

Answer from Steve Grainger

A. We have been working hard to get support packages out there. We will be doing more Zoom / Teams etc. and can have direct dialogue as required through CBs.

General comment was that clubs seem a lot closer now, closer than ever. In this CB we have a WhatsApp group for chairmen and a regular Chairman's meeting monthly which has been a big positive especially for smaller clubs. Everyone feels inclusive.

5. Prior to Covid 19 did the RFU have a plan to how they would respond to a

pandemic e.g. Influenza? And based on the Covid pandemic, what steps are being taken by the RFU as part of their recovery plan, should a similar event happen in the future.

Answer from Steve Grainger

A. No we didn't have a plan in place to deal with a pandemic. We did look at insurance a few years ago for a pandemic and the prices of the premiums were exponentially high despite never having had a pandemic at that time. The premium was millions and was not financially viable.

We will not be spending time and resources to plan for another one, is not viable time or finance wise. We will look at lessons learned.

It has taught us the delicate nature of our business models. Despite diversifying revenues we still have a huge reliance on big games each year (England Senior men's team). Taking this down to club level the reliance is often still on the home matches. Diversification of revenue going forward is something for clubs to look at and focus on.

6. Will clubs have to complete and submit payment of player's declarations this season?

Answer from Steve Grainger

A. No they will not be needed this season.

7. Would the societies get any funding from the RFU / CBs or from the RRFU?

Answers from Steve Grainger

A. The immediate support fund the CB holds can be used for referee's societies. This is not to top money or revenues up; it should be used when needed. This is emergency support.

8. We can't have scrums and mauls for obvious reasons at the moment but this doesn't make the game attractive to the forward players. Has the RFU had any thought on how we will retain these players going forward?

Answers from Steve Grainger

A. Biggest fear is particularly the front row players; we need those players in the game. Big plea is to keep the players involved. SG will share a piece on how we can keep and develop skills for those players. Lineouts have to be a minimum of 5 players to help provide a little bit of purpose to help. The RFU share this concern.

On 10th December there is a webinar discussing the law. Becca will share that link. Clubs can attend the webinar. Becca will send the link to Karen for sharing.

Beccas key role is to get to know the CB and how to work with us. She will be in touch for regular bi weekly meetings. Karen and Pete will work some dates out to share with Becca and plan to start conversations with Becca in January 2021. Beccas focus is from a CB perspective. Scott Sturdy works more from a club perspective and will be supporting Dave Larham with his role.

Becca confirmed accreditation had been extended. Dave Stubley is leading on that.

3. Updates from the board

RW from Council perspective no further update. Dave Larham gave the club chairs a presentation last night. Karen will share this with the board.

DB is still waiting for cluster information. It is not ready yet. As soon as there is an update DB will share it. Updates will come straight from Southwest.

JW/PW had meeting with Chris today. Putting in place 21/22 u13/ u15 girls' competitions. Jane and Paul will run it with Chris overseeing. This is a new thing for the county. We need to know how many girls play in the county. U14 asked if any form of competition next year, at the moment we think with the u18 age grade there are lots of complications so a holding mail will be sent. Limited to dates left in the competitions calendar, notoriously difficult with weather due to time of year for games but also challenges of clubs being able to raise teams. Better to focus on restart and new competitions Sept 21 onwards.

PW is having conversation with SW competitions to see if there is something we can do prior to Sept 21 – perhaps festivals (good revenue for clubs). This might lean towards younger age groups. Nothing concrete at the moment, all in progress and nothing confirmed, it would be reliant on restrictions being lifted. Spectator numbers and large player numbers is an issue at the moment.

Board view is at the moment we should not be pushing competitions, Covid is a risk at the moment.

PP no update on the Development front.

GO has had website discussion PP, AT, PW, GO. Looking at the RFU option. It is proposed to launch our own website. PP will work the content for the site. Pitchero will be closed down. It will cost approx. £200 for the website. The domain will be registered. OxfordshireRFU is preferred over ORFU.

GO talked with Berkshire communications officer. Go has launched Oxfordshire RFU Instagram site this week and will start to use it more as more of a youth based opportunity to reach that age group. In future we need to think about more sponsorship ideas.

Sponsorship to sit with Andy from a financial perspective with a dotted line to GO in terms of getting the communications out.

AT confirmed no radio adverts in the budget.

AT we have spent just over £600 on the hand sanitiser for clubs. No other clubs have approached for funding. £14,000 left in the fund. This is open until the end of March.

KE shared with clubs the accounts, nothing came back in response.

4. AOB

PB reminded people to send KE their terms of references if not sent already. These can then go on the website and published. We need these before Jan board meeting.

KE reported that Faringdon RFC are still not responding to communication but we will persevere to contact them. Good communication from clubs through the month. GMS communications work well for document sharing etc.

Meeting ends 20:55